

**MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS**

**MAY 14, 2019**

**Supporting Foster Youth and Resource Families**

It has long been understood that when children live with a loving, stable, and permanent family that nurtures and protects them, they are more likely to be healthy and self-sufficient as adults. One of the most pressing challenges in caring for children in the foster care system is the identification, recruitment, assessment, approval, support, and retention of families that can provide stable and supportive homes.

The Los Angeles County (County) Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) engages in innovative strategies to recruit, retain, and support resource families. As part of the approval of the 2015 Budget Act, Senate Bill 97 included funding to help strengthen foster parent, resource family and relative caregiver retention, recruitment, training requirements and strategies. These funds are made available through Foster Parent Recruitment Retention and Support (FPRRS) awards granted to the State of California's (State) 58 counties.

On May 9, 2017, the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a motion instructing DCFS to use a portion of its FPRRS award to help fund a first-of-its-kind Resource Family Recruitment Convening. As a result, DCFS was able to partner with the Center for Strategic Public-Private Partnerships (now Center for Strategic Partnerships), faith-based institutions, and philanthropic organizations to host a successful event that

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offered multiple services under one roof in order to expedite the Resource Family Approval (RFA) process for more than 60 prospective resource families. This event gave rise to the creation of the Faith Foster Families Network (3FN), a coalition of six faith-based institutions that have committed to supporting the recruitment and retention of resource families. 3FN is now a project of Community Partners and employs strategies to raise awareness and engage individuals and families in serving as resource families or providing support to foster youth and resource families through mentoring, coaching, tutoring, and child care.

Over the last two years, the County has continued to co-host “Fostering Home” recruitment events, where prospective resource parents can complete multiple elements of the RFA process in one location. Prospective resource families attend an orientation session, complete a health screening, and receive assistance from social workers with submitting required paperwork. FPRRS funding has been key to the success of these events.

In addition to recruiting more families, the County must focus on improving the retention rates of resource families by offering the tangible supports they need to be successful. This includes respite care, items that assist caregivers in meeting the immediate needs of infants and toddlers, and extracurricular activities (such as camps, music lessons, arts workshops, etc.) for children placed in their care. Accordingly, the State has required that a portion of the County’s FPRRS award be dedicated to such support and retention activities.

In January of this year, the State notified the County that FPRRS awards would not be made available for FY 2019-20 and that all FY 2018-19 FPRRS funding must be expended by June 30, 2019. This creates an urgent need for the County to ensure that remaining funds are used to serve as many resource families and children and youth in foster care as possible prior to the end of the fiscal year. Providing trauma-informed

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resources for children and adolescents in the foster care system and offering extra support for the resource families that care for them is critical to accomplishing this goal.

**I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

1. Instruct the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to use up to \$100,000 from the Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention and Support (FPRRS) award to partner with Faith Foster Families Network's recruitment, retention, and support efforts;
2. Authorize the Director of DCFS to provide approximately 300 more children and youth in foster care with campership experiences at a total cost of no more than \$150,000 of the FPRRS award; and
3. Instruct the Director of DCFS to continue exploring the expansion of campership options to include specialized camps for medically fragile children, children who have been exposed to domestic violence, and children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other special needs, as well as the expansion of extracurricular options to include programming that promotes self-care, mental health and emotional well-being, such as meditation, mindfulness, and personal development.

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